

News Release



**Allied Maritime
Command Headquarters
Northwood
www.manw.nato.int**



Ref: SNMG2 2011 /014

28 MARCH 2011

NATO Flagship Welcomes Chinese Navy Taskforce Commander

London: At the weekend the Commander of NATO maritime forces conducting counter piracy operation *Ocean Shield*, Commodore Michiel Hijmans (Royal Netherlands Navy), gave a warm welcome to his Chinese counterpart, Commodore Han Xiaoh, when he visited the new NATO flagship HNLMS Tromp at sea in the Gulf of Aden.

The Chinese Navy has been busy in the Gulf of Aden escorting merchant ships through the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor. Having recently taken over command of the Chinese counter piracy task force, Commodore Han Xiaoh stated that he would be very happy to continue the relationship with NATO maritime forces started by his predecessor and work on keeping the sea lanes open and safe from piracy and crime.

Speaking about the visit by Commodore Han Xiaoh to the NATO flagship, Commodore Hijmans stated "I am delighted that NATO is building on what we had already established with the Chinese Navy. The contribution of all navies in the region is vital to keep a grip on the enormous area we have to cover and the numerous pirate vessels that are causing so much havoc. As long as we keep working together maritime forces stand a chance of keeping the pirates at bay."

----TEXT ENDS----

Background Information:

NATO has contributed to the international counter piracy effort off the Horn of Africa since December 2008. The mission has expanded from escorting UN and World Food Programme Shipping under Operation Allied Provider and protecting merchant traffic in the Gulf of Aden under Operation Allied Protector. In addition to these activities and as part of the latest mission, Operation Ocean Shield, NATO is working with other international bodies to help develop capacity of countries in the region to tackle piracy on their own.

Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 is permanently assigned to NATO. It is a multi-national Naval Group that provides the NATO Alliance with the ability to quickly respond to crisis situations anywhere in the world. A capable, stand-alone task group and one of four standing maritime elements that form a flexible core around which NATO can build a larger force to meet a wide range of missions that will include non-combatant evacuations, consequence management, counter terrorism, crisis response, embargo operations, etc.

NATO has announced its continuing commitment to counter-piracy by extending Operation Ocean Shield to December 2012.

NATO Forces currently in Operation Ocean Shield:

- HNLMS TROMP (Flagship) - Netherlands
- HDMS ESBERN SNARE - Denmark
- USS BAINBRIDGE - United States of America
- USS HALYBURTON – United States of America
- TCG GIRESUN – Turkey

Media Inquiries only to:

Public Affairs Officer

+44 (0)1923 956763

+44 (0) 7747 008508

<mailto:pio@manw.nato.int>

FACEBOOK Group: CTF 508 Operation OCEAN SHIELD

Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2)